Supreme Court, U. S.
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MICHAEL RODAK, JR., CL

80-963

No.

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

October Term, 1980

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN
Petitioner

v.

JOHNNIE JOSEPH OLAH
Respondent

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN

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I
QUESTION PRESENTED

I.

UNDER BALDASAR v ILLINOIS, ___ US ___; 64 L Ed 2 d 169 (1920) MAY AN UNCOUNSELED MISDEMEANOR CONVICTION, ITSELF CONSTITUTIONAL UNDER SCOTT v ILLINOIS, 440 US 367 (1979) IN THAT NO TERM OF IMPRISONMENT WAS IMPOSED, BE USED TO FORM THE BASIS OF REVOCATION OF A PREVIOUSLY IMPOSED TERM OF PROBATION IN ANOTHER CASE?

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JOHNNIE JOSEPH OLAH
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Petition For A Writ Of Certiorari To
The Supreme Court Of The State Of Michigan

Petition For A Writ Of Certiorari To The Supreme Court Of The State Of Michigan

NOW COMES William L. Cahalan, Prosecuting Attorney in and for the County of Wayne, State of Michigan, by Edward Reilly Wilson, Principal Attorney, Appeals, and Timothy A. Baughman, Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, and prays that a Writ of Certiorari issue to review the judgment of the Supreme Court of the State of Michigan, entered in the above-entitled cause on November 21, 1980.

OPINIONS BELOW

The opinion of the Michigan Court of Appeals is reported at 90 Mich App 402; 282 NW 2d 335 (1979), and is appended as Appendix A. The order of the Michigan Supreme Court is not yet reported, and is appended as Appendix B.

STATEMENT OF JURISDICTION

The judgment of the Michigan Court of Appeals was entered on May 23, 1979. The judgment of the Michigan Supreme Court was entered on November 21, 1980. The jurisdiction of this Court is invoked under 28 USC sec. 1257(3).

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS INVOLVED

The Sixth Amendment to the United States Constitution provides, in pertinent part:

> In all criminal prosecutions the accused shall enjoy the right . . . to have the assistance of Counsel for his defence.

The Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution provides, in pertinent part:

> . . . No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

In December of 1974 respondent was found guilty of felonious assault and sentenced to two years probation, the first six months to be spent in the Detroit House of Correction. A condition of probation was that he not violate any criminal laws or ordinances.

On December 18, 1975 respondent was convicted, without counsel, of a controlled substances misdemeanor, and on July 27, 1976, a marijuana ordinance violation. He paid fines on both cases and was not incarcerated. On October 29, 1976, a petition was filed charging respondent with violating the terms of his probation, alleging, among other things, the above-mentioned convictions. Probation was revoked at a hearing wherein respondent had counsel.

The Michigan Court of Appeals affirmed, relying on Scott v Illinois, 440 US 367 (1979), and observing:

> . . . revocation was by no means the inevitable result of the misdemeanor convictions. Defendant's probation was revoked only after a hearing at which he was afforded the opportunity to present evidence in his defense or in mitigation of the apparent violation of which he was accused. Defendant was afforded assistance of counsel at this hearing, as well as at his trial on the original felony charge. At every stage of the proceedings at which he could have suffered the penalty of imprisonment, therefore, defendant had his constitutional right to counsel. 90 Mich App at 406-407.

The Michigan Supreme Court reversed relying on the intervening decision of Baldasar v Illinois, ___ US ___; 64 L Ed 2d 169 (1980): "Violation of probation which results in a prison sentence is an increase as to an original sentencing decision which is precluded by Baldasar v Illinois if counsel did not assist the defendant at the interim prosecutions."

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE WRIT

Baldasar v Illinois, ___ US ___; 64 L Ed 2d 169 (1980) is a confusing case. It appears that once Baldasar was charged under Illinois law as a second offender and convicted (his first conviction being counselless but constitutional under Scott v Illinois, 440 US 367 (1979)) the trial judge had no option but to sentence him as a felon. Justices Stewart, Brennan and Stevens joined in stating that reversal was required because Baldasar "was sentenced to an increased term of imprisonment only because he had been convicted in a previous prosecution in which he had not had the assistance of appointed counsel in his defense." (emphasis in original) 64 L Ed 2 d at 173. Justices Marshall, Brennan and Stevens observed that "Solely because of the previous conviction the second offense was transformed from a misdemeanor into a felony. . . ." 64 L Ed 2d at 174. Justice Blackmun held to his dissent in Scott. Justices Powell, White, Rehnquist, and the Chief Justice dissented, rejecting the view that sentence enhancement equals imprisonment for the earlier offense, and noting the constitutional validity of the first conviction.

The instant case does not fall within the rationale of the concurring opinions. Respondent's convictions did not automatically trigger revocation of his probation; rather, as the trial judge stated, they constituted a prima facie showing that respondent had "violated a criminal law or ordinance." Respondent was free to allege that despite the convictions he had not in fact violated any law. He did not do so. In Baldasar for defendant to have disputed his factual guilt of the counselless conviction would have been irrelevant at the second trial. Not so here, at a hearing at which respondent was supplied counsel. The Michigan Supreme Court has misconstrued Baldasar. The Michigan Court of Appeals was correct.

RELIEF

Wherefore, Petitioner requests that plenary review be granted.

Respectfully submitted,

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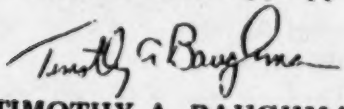
County of Wayne
State of Michigan

EDWARD REILLY WILSON
Principal Attorney, Appeals



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Dated: December 1, 1980

APPENDIX "A"

PEOPLE v OLAH

Docket No. 77-1723. Submitted March 6, 1979, at Detroit. — Decided May 23, 1979.

Johnnie J. Olah was convicted of felonious assault and was placed on probation. He was subsequently convicted of two misdemeanors, and it was alleged that he had failed to pay costs and restitution as required in the order of probation. A probation revocation hearing was held at which defendant was represented by counsel. He was found guilty of probation violation. As a consequence, his probation was revoked and he was sentenced to prison, Wayne Circuit Court, William J. Giovan, J. Defendant appeals, alleging that the trial court erred in considering the misdemeanor convictions because the convictions were invalid as he was indigent and was not offered the assistance of counsel at any of the proceedings in connection with the misdemeanor convictions. Held:

The misdemeanor convictions are not invalid. In each case the defendant paid a fine and served no time in jail or in prison. The Constitution requires only that an indigent may not be sentenced to prison unless afforded the right to appointed counsel. The fact that the defendant was not offered the assistance of counsel in the proceedings on the misdemeanors does not invalidate the misdemeanor convictions because a term of imprisonment was not the inevitable result of those convictions.

Affirmed.

Criminal Law — Constitutional Law — Assistance of Counsel — Imprisonment — Misdemeanors.

Appendix "A"

An indigent criminal defendant who has not been afforded the right to assistance of appointed counsel may not be sentenced to a term of imprisonment; a conviction for a misdemeanor for which a defendant paid a fine and did not serve time in jail or in prison is not rendered constitutionally infirm by the fact that the defendant, allegedly an indigent, was not offered the assiistance of counsel (US Const, Ams VI, XIV).

Rold E. Berg, Assistant State Appellate Defender, for defendant on appeal.

Before: N. J. Kaufman, P.J., and T. M. Burns and R. M. Maher, JJ.

Per Curiam. Defendant appeals as of right from an order of the Wayne County Circuit Court, dated January 24, 1977, revoking his probation and sentencing defendant to a term in prison of from 16 months to 4 years with credit given for 257 days spent in custody.

The basis for defendant's probation was a December 4, 1974 jury verdict finding him guilty of felonious assault contrary to MCL 750.82; MSA 28.277. Thereafter, on February 24, 1975, defendant was placed on 2 years probation.

The conditions of defendant's probation were that he spend the first 6 months of the probation period in the Detroit House of Correction, that he pay costs of $345 in equal monthly installments beginning 30 days after his release from confinement and that he make restitution in the amount of $182 within 6 months of his release. A further condition of probation was that defendant not violate any criminal laws or ordinances.

Defendant appealed his conviction for felonious assault and this Court affirmed, Docket No. 23601, December 5, 1975 [unreported].

Thereafter, on October 29, 1976, a petition was filed charging defendant with violation of the terms of his probation. Specifically, the petition alleged that defendant was convicted of two misdemeanors, the first being a December 18, 1975, conviction under the Controlled Substances Act in the 19th District Court and the second being a July 27, 1976, conviction for possession of marijuana under a Detroit city ordinance in the Recorder's Court, Traffic and Ordinance Division. The petition further alleged that defendant failed to pay court costs and restitution as required by the terms of probation. The trial court found defendant guilty of probation violation on all counts.

On appeal defendant asserts that the trial court erred in considering his misdemeanor convictions. He maintains, citing Argersinger v Hamlin, 407 US 25; 92 S Ct 2006; 32 L Ed 2d 530 (1972), that these convictions were constitutionally infirm in that he was indigent, was not offered the assistance of counsel and did not waive counsel at any stage of the proceedings connected with his misdemeanor convictions. Defendant argues persuasively that constitutionally infirm convictions may not serve as a basis for revoking probation, analogizing to the sentence enhancement and impeachment cases. See People v Moore, 391 Mich 426; 216 NW2d 770 (1974). The argument fails, however, because defendant's convictions are not constitutionally infirm.

We note that on each occasion defendant paid the assessed fine and did not serve time in jail or in prison. In Scott v Illinois, ___ US ___; 99 S Ct 1158, 1162; 59 L Ed 2d 383, 389 (1979), the United States Supreme Court clarified its decision in Argersinger, supra, saying:

> "Although the intentions of the Argersinger Court are not unmistakably clear from its opinion, we conclude today that Argersinger did indeed delimit the constitutional right to appointed

counsel in state criminal proceedings. Even were the matter res nova, we believe that the central premise of Argersinger — that actual imprisonment is a penalty different in kind from fines or the mere threat of imprisonment — is eminently sound and warrants adoption of actual imprisonment as the line defining the constitutional right to appointment of counsel. Argersinger has proved reasonably workable, whereas any extension would create confusion and impose unpredictable, but necessarily substantial costs on 50 quite diverse States. We therefore hold that the Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution require only that no indigent criminal defendant be sentenced to a term of imprisonment unless the State has afforded him the right to assistance of appointed counsel in his defense." (Footnotes omitted.)

Thus, since defendant's convictions were not constitutionally infirm, his argument that the misdemeanor convictions could not be considered at his probation revocation proceeding must fail.

Defendant, however, advances the argument that he was sentenced to prison for probation violation as a result of the misdemeanor convictions, and that this renders these convictions infirm for lack of counsel. We disagree. Defendant was sentenced to a term of imprisonment, not for committing the misdemeanors, but for committing the felony of felonious assault, and thereafter violating the terms of his probation.[1] It is true that the misdemeanors were the cause of the revocation of defendant's probation, and the revocation of probation resulted in the sentence of imprisonment. However, revocation of defendant's probation was by no means the inevitable result of the misdemeanor convictions. Defendant's probation was revoked only after a hearing at which he was afforded the opportunity to present evidence in his defense or in

mitigation of the apparent violation of which he was accused. Defendant was afforded assistance of counsel at this hearing, as well as at his trial on the original felony charge. At every stage of the proceedings at which he could have suffered the penalty of imprisonment, therefore, defendant had his constitutional right to counsel.

Because we find that defendant's probation was properly revoked on the basis of his valid misdemeanor convictions, we do not reach his other claim of error.

Affirmed.

References for Points in Headnote

21 Am Jur 2D, Criminal Law §318.

Constitutionally protected right of indigent accused to appointment of counsel in state court prosecution. 93 ALR2d 747.

[1] People v Brooks, 16 Mich App 759; 168 NW2d 658 (1969), apparently holds that a probationer is entitled to counsel at a misdemeanor trial at least in part because he may be imprisoned thereafter for probation violation. We note that the Brooks Court did not have the benefit of the explanation of Argersinger v Hamlin provided in Scott v Illinois. To the extent that Brooks is inconsistent with this opinion, we decline to follow it.

APPENDIX "B"

AT A SESSION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN, Held at the Supreme Court Room, in the City of Lansing, on the 21st day of November in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and eighty.

Present the Honorable

MARY S. COLEMAN,
Chief Justice,
THOMAS GILES KAVANAGH,
G. MENNEN WILLIAMS,
CHARLES L. LEVIN,
JOHN W. FITZGERALD,
JAMES L. RYAN,
BLAIR MOODY, JR.,
Associate Justices

CR 27-240
(27-240a)

PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN,
Plaintiff-Appellee,

v

SC: 63671
COA: 77-1723
LC: 74-027-971-FA

JOHNNIE J. OLAH,
Defendant-Appellant.

On order of the Court, the delayed application for leave to appeal, the defendant-appellant's brief on appeal, and the responses to this Court's June 25, 1980, order to show cause are considered and, pursuant to GCR 1963, 865.1(7), we REVERSE the decision of the Court of Appeals and REMAND to the Wayne Circuit Court because the defendant's violation of probation was based in part upon two misdemeanor or ordinance convictions obtained when defendant Olah was not represented by counsel. A court may not enhance punishment at

sentencing because of a misdemeanor or ordinance conviction obtained when defendant was not represented by counsel. Baldasar v Illinois, ___ US ___; 100 S Ct 1585; 64 L Ed 2d 169 (1980). Violation of probation which results in a prison sentence is an increase as to an original sentencing decision which is precluded by Baldasar v Illinois, if counsel did not assist the defendant at the interim prosecutions. The case is remanded to the Wayne Circuit Court for further proceedings not inconsistent with this order.

We retain no jurisdiction.

Ryan, J., not participating.

STATE OF MICHIGAN — ss.

I, Harold Hoag, Clerk of the Supreme Court of the State of Michigan, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of an order entered in said court in said cause; that I have compared the same with the original, and that it is a true transcript therefrom, and the whole of said original order.

Seal

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of said Supreme Court at Lansing, this 21st day of November in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and eighty.

/s/ Corbin R. Davis, Deputy Clerk.